

Banks (8.)
K

A

10

General EPISTLE TO FRIENDS,

To be Read in all your Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, where this may Come.

Dear Friends, and Brethren:

UNTO you I am chiefly concerned to write, that have known the good and blessed beginning of the work of God in your hearts; (tho! not so Early as some have done) by the living appearance of his mighty Power, and quickening Spirit of Life, in and through *Jesus Christ*, manifested.

Happy are you, and happy shall you be, if you keep close to the working and operation thereof in your Inward retired waiting upon the Lord, in your blessed Meetings and when absent also, from one day and time to another.

And in so waiting, and keeping close to the Divine power, it will work a Change in you, not only to convince of sin and unrighteousness, but to convert your hearts; so that instead of a Stony heart, a heart of flesh will be given: the one is hard the other soft and Tender.

A

Now

Now you that have known the beginning of the work of God on this wise, you have known judgment to Seize upon you; and to be set up and Executed in you, upon the old perverse nature, and unruly will, that too many love and follow.

You have known or must know, Godly sorrow, weeping, mourning, spiritual pain, yea Quaking and Trembling: Self to be denied, and the daily Cross to be born.

For the Truth cannot be purchased, to have it in possession but with the Loss of all things. For they that are not willing to suffer, loss of Goods. Imprisonment, or otherwise, for *Christ's sake* when required; such love that they are not willing to lose for Truth better than *Christ*; notwithstanding, how they may flatter themselves, or make their own peace.

How do they *Love Truth and Righteousness*, that will not so much as use the *plain Language* to Every single Person? what is it can be Expected such will lose, or part with for the Truth, that are not willing to take up the *Cross* in the Least of things.

Well, they that make a Light matter of little and small things shall never be made Rulers over more, until they be faithful in them, (mark and take good notice of that) for it is too Evident such as have known the Good and Blessed beginning of the work of God in them, if they have not been faithful thereto, they have neglected to keep to the Power by which the Lord our God never fails, to work all our works both in us and for us; as we with dilligence and true fear keep thereunto.

Stand fast according to our Antient Testimony, against all Oaths and Swearing, and let your *Yea be Yea*, and your *Nay Nay* least you fall into Condemnation, James 5. 12. For as *Christ Jesus* said, who gave the Command, not to Swear at all, let your Communication be *Yea Yea, Nay Nay*, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil. Mat. 5. 37. observe this well also.



Be

Be very careful that none let their Testimony fall against that great oppression of *Tithes* (whosoever may demand them) for those who do so, manifest themselves to be *Unfaithful*, in their *Testimony* for our *Lord Jesus Christ*.

To begin well, and to continue so unto the End, makes a blessed and happy Ending; for it is the End that Crowns all. But they have little hope to end well, that never knew a Good and Right beginning; for that is in *Judgment*, and the *Judgment* must be patiently kept to, and dwelt in, and then men will find mercy mixed with *Judgment*.

But some are apt to cry out against *Judgment* and *Judging*, because they love it not in themselves, tho! their condition deserves it, but are all for *mercy*, without, or before *Judgment*, which cannot be. Remember *David*, who said (speaking to the Lord) *how do I love thy judgments*: And the *Aposhle* said *if we would judge our selves, we should not be judged*.

So I say, unto such of you as have only made a Profession of the Truth, a Longer, or shorter time, it is greatly needful for you all to know the good and blessed beginning of the work of God in your own hearts, and if so you will know what it is to die daily, die to self, die to your *wills*, die to your *Natural Inclinations*, die to the *worldly* and *Earthly mindedness*, yea whatsoever the Light of the Lord Jesus, makes manifest, that hinders the going on of the work of God in you, and your growth and Prosperity in the blessed truth: you must know a dying to it all, or you cannot come to live unto God. And my Soul's desire is that you might all live to him, who make mention of his name, in the smallest measure. So you that have known the Good beginning of the work of God, in you, and a keeping in your hearts close thereunto, as those that know your faith to stand in the Power of God, you will know a Growing in grace, and from one degree of holiness to another, and so witness Life through death; for as the Apostle *Paul* said, *I am Crucified with Christ, nevertheless I Live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and*

the life which I now live, in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God: observe, the Life that I now live; which bespeaks he lived another life before Christ was revealed in him, so here is a true Testimony of a Change wrought in him.

This is the way for you all, *Dear Friends*, to come to know what it is to be born again, and so to be a new Creature, Created again in Christ Jesus, unto newness of Life, to serve the living God therein, so that you will come to witness, and Experience, what it is to grow from the Degree of a Child, to the Stature of a Young Man, and so to be as Fathers, and Elders in the Church. As *John* in his General Epistle, said *I write unto you little Children that you sin not, and unto you Young Men because you are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the Wicked one, I have written to you Fathers, because you have known him that is from the Beginning.*

So the desire of my heart, and breathing of my soul unto the Pure God for you all is, that you may on this wise, and in this manner as I have said, know a growing in *Grace, Purity, Holiness, and Saving Knowledge*, and that through faith in *Christ Jesus*, as those that know your faith to stand in his power to the full finishing and perfecting of the work of God in you, that so you may seriously Consider, and lay to heart, wherefore the Lord hath done what he has done for you, which assuredly is not that you should serve your selves, and this world; but to serve him *the Living God in truth and Faithfulness*, not only upon the account of worship, tho, chiefly therein, but also in an holy conversation using the Power the Lord hath Enabled and abillitated you with, in *managing, maintaining, keeping and upholding, Gospel Order and Discipline*: in and under a *Living Concern* thereof, and sensible true weightiness therein. the Lord preserve and keep you all.

And now unto all you who have been more early called and visited in the visitation of the Day springing from

on

on high, that have been made witnesses of the work of God in you, by his own Power to fit and prepare you as Instruments in his hand, for his *Work and Service*, I say unto you keep your first love, and hold fast your confidence and true zeal, for the Lord, his *Name, Truth and Glory, both Men and Women in all your Meetings.*

And all *Friends*, Everywhere, who are called to Worship God in Spirit and Truth, keep your first day, and week day *Meetings*; and when you are met, be true in heart in waiting upon the Lord; that you may not offend him, nor grieve his holy Spirit; nor burthen the *tender-hearted* ones, by giving way to a *Spirit of slumber*; what! is any one so careless and void of fear toward God, not so much as to say to your selves, what did I come here for this day? perhaps one good thought and Consideration might beget another to stir thee up to fervency of spirit, and not to spend any of thy time carelessly, and so go away without profit or Refreshment (as thou came) now can any one under a Profession of the truth, and worship of God, content and satisfie themselves thus, from one day and week to another?

I know no Clearer Evidence that can be given of a falling away, and losing *Zeal for the Lord*, and true worship, then when any one begins to neglect keeping to *Meetings*, it bespeaks Coldness of Love, and drawing back, instead of going forward; and if any man draw back *my soul hath no pleasure in him saith the Lord.*

So Dear *Friends*, you that are called to be *Elders*, and *Overseers* in the Church of Christ according to the ordination of God, and the holy Apostles: carefully mind your work and service therein, both *Men and Women*; and when you are concerned to deal with any for their loose living, and disorderly walking: Who thereby give many offences, both Publickly and particularly, causing Truth to suffer, and making the hearts of the Righteous sad; besure that you give to such Gospel order: but be rather more sure that you do it in a Gospel Spirit, which
is

is Meek and Lowly, always having a regard to the soul; forgiving and passing by what may be forgiven according to Truth, and Gospel order.

There is a great difference of offences, *Peter* said to *Christ*, *how often shall I forgive my Brother. (Seven times)* *Jesus* said unto him, *I say unto thee not only Seven times, but 70. times Seven:* Now some because of this often forgiveness, would always be forgiven, without repenting of the offences they have given; and continue still offending: Which bespeaks they are willing to Flatter themselves, and would have mercy before judgment.

It is true, we must forgive all offences, and Trespasses against us committed; or else ours will not be forgiven; but it doth not therefore follow (tho we so forgive) that this will acquit or clear the offenders, of their offences and trespasses, in the sight of God, and his people; Consider this well, if thy *Brother* offend thee reprove him (but be sure it be in the spirit of Love, and meekness) if he hear thee thou hast gained thy *Brother*; but if he will not, Take two or three, and if he will not hear them, acquaint the Church, said *Christ*.

There are many offences greater than offences against a *Brother*, and yet such offences rise to too great a highth, many times, and do great hurt, be careful to nip them in the bud, and when you are to deal with offenders, where any tenderness doth appear, lay hold on that, and do what you can to help and strengthen such; and be not shy and strange one to another; that begets nothing for God and Truth.

Do not say I see this, and know the other, and tell it behind back, before the party is spoken to; but if any in dealing with them, prove stubborn, and wilful, and will not take Council, and advice: nor be subject to Gospel order, nor condemn their Evil deeds, and actions, by giving forth a publick Testimony against themselves, to clear *Friends and Truth* Then you ought to give forth a publick Testimony against them, when you have done what
you

you can to reclaim them, and not to let unruly Spirits come over you; such as abound in their own-sense and judgment, but will not be subject to any body's else. Be sure you be clear of that your selves, that you deal with others for, so that things be well at home; and that there be no difference between husband and wife, and that your Children be trained up in the Fear of God; as becomes the truth, and not suffer them to run into, and follow the vain customs and antick foolish Changeable fashions, of the world; with their corrupt confused Language, of yee and you to a single person; and none to be unequally yoked in Marriage.

Be at peace among your selves, both *Men* and *Women*, in all your Meetings; and speak in order to Edification, *Dear Friends* keep in the unity of the Spirit, which is the bond of peace, and the God of Love and peace, keep and preserve you all therein, faithful unto the End, Amen.

And so I bid you farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ, who do remain your lovingly concerned Brother for your Eternal Good.

Given forth at *Street* in *Somerset-shire* the
4th of the 7th Month, 1708.

JOHN BANCKS.

FINIS

you can to explain them, and not to let your Spirit
 come over you. God is abundant in their own sense, and
 judgment, but will not be subject to any body's else. Be-
 lieve you be clear of that your lives, that you deal with
 others for, to that things be well at home; and that there
 be no difference between husband and wife, and that your
 child be trained up in the Fear of God; as becomes
 the truth, and not suffer them to run into, and follow
 the vain customs and antient foolish Changeable fashions
 of the world; with their corrupt contemned language, of
 you and you is a good person; and a man to be unchangeably
 looked in the face.
 Be at peace among your lives, God will be with you
 in all your doings; and that is our to Edification.
 Draw forth keep in the unity of the Spirit, which is the
 bond of peace, and the Oil of Love and peace keep and
 preserve you all these things into the End, Amen.
 And so I bid you, the Lord Jesus Christ
 who do remain your Father, your Brother, for
 your Eternal Good.



Given forth at Great Britain, the 14th of the 7th Month 1788.

JOHN BANCROFT

1712

